and much of Asia, containing ash, acids, aerosols and other particles, which could have profound effect on human health, crop-yield and the rain pattern;

(b) if so, the details in this regard and how far it would pollute air in our land;

(c) the details of the major observations/conclusions contained in the report and the result of any further investigations made into these conclusions; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to guard against the harmful effects on our system?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (d) An international collaborative study "Indian Ocean Research Experiment (INDOEX)" has indicated haze over the Indian Ocean. The haze is not a permanent feature of the atmosphere over the Asian region and the surrounding seas. It occurs only during January—March, the season in which INDOEX observations were made in 1999. Conclusive data are not available to co-relate the impact of haze on human health as well as the monsoon and/or agriculture of our country. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has, this year, brought out a report entitled "The Asian Brown Cloud: Climate and other Environmental Impacts" based on INDOEX. The press release of the UNEP launching the said report paints an alarming picture of the impacts of this haze on both regional and global scales. However, most of the concerns expressed therein are not well substantiated by reliable modeling studies or experimental observations. The existing legal and policy framework, supported by several initiatives to protect and improve the environment, addresses the concerns of air pollution in the country.

Eco-friendly and Bio-degradable Plastic

†1100. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have formulated any special action plan for a new protocol to promote eco-friendly and bio-degradable plastic;

(b) if so the details thereof; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to prevent pollution spread by the plastic and by when the eco-friendly and biodegradable plastic would be made available in the Indian market?

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) A report on the Technology Status and Prospects of Bio-degradable plastics in India has been prepared. International protocols like ASTM D 6,400; DIN 54,900 and EN 13,432 are available for testing bio degradability of the plastic. Further, a high level Committee constituted on plastic waste disposal has recommended that support for R&D should be provided for development of degradable/bio-degradable plastics as also non-plastic alternatives.

To prevent the plastic pollution, a set of rules entitled "Recycled Plastics Manufacture & Usage Rules, 1999" were notified prescribing a minimum thickness of 20 microns for plastic carry bags and prohibiting the use of recycled plastics for packaging and dispensing of food stuff. Currently bio-degradable plastic materials are bring manufactured in the country.

NFAP in Gujarat

1101. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the composition and objectives of the National Forestry Action Programme (NFAP);

(b) the total land earmarked for implementation of the programme in Gujarat; and

(c) the details of land earmarked for each main and sub-programme under the main components?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The National Forestry Action Plan (NFAP) is a compilation of the State Forestry Action Programmes formulated by the State/Union Territory Governments. NFAP is a comprehensive strategic long term plan for the next twenty years to address the issues underlying major problems of the forestry sector in line with the National Forest Policy, 1988. The objective of the NFAP is to bring one-third area of the country under forest/tree cover to arrest de-forestation for achieving sustainable development of forests.

The National Forestry Action Programme has the following five main components:

1. Protection of the existing forest resources.
2. Improvement of forest productivity.